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REMARKS

In response to the Office Action mailed on April 9, 2003, Applicants respectfully request reconsideration. To further the prosecution of this Application, Applicants submit the following remarks, and have canceled claims. The claims as now presented are believed to be in allowable condition.

Claims 1-29 were pending in this Application. By this Amendment, claims 20-23 and 27-29 have been canceled without prejudice. Applicants expressly reserve the right to prosecute the canceled claims and similar claims in one or more related Applications. Accordingly, claims 1-19 and 24-26 are now pending in this Application. Claims 1, 3, 9, 17, 25 and 26 are independent claims.

Preliminary Matters

Applicants wish to that Examiner Whittington for (i) signing and returning an earlier-submitted PTO-1449 Form, (ii) accepting the formal drawings submitted on July 26, 2001, and (iii) accepting Applicants' amendment to the Specification to cure a minor informality.

Allowed Claims

Claims 3 and 25-29 were objected to as being dependent on a rejected base claim but were deemed allowable if rewritten in independent form to include all of the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims.

Claim 3

Applicants have rewritten claim 3 to include all of the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims, i.e., to include all of the limitations of claim 1 from which it depended. Accordingly, claim 3 is now in allowable condition.



Claim 25

Applicants have rewritten claim 25 to include all of the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims, i.e., to include all of the limitations of claim 1 from which it depended. Accordingly, claim 25 is now in allowable condition.

Claim 26

Applicants have rewritten claim 26 to include all of the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims, i.e., to include all of the limitations of claim 1 from which it depended. Accordingly, claim 26 is now in allowable condition.

Claims 1-8, 24 and 27

Rather than amend allowed claim 27 to include all of the limitations of base claim 1, Applicants have rewritten claim 1 to include all of the limitations of claim 27 and canceled claim 27. Accordingly, claim 1 is now in allowable condition.

Because claims 2-8 and 24 depend from and further limit claim 1, claims 2-8 and 24 are in allowable condition for at least the same reasons. Applicants wish to point out that Applicants have also made some clarifying amendments to some of the dependent claims in order to make them consistent with claim 1, as amended.

Claims 9-16 and 28

Rather than amend allowed claim 28 to include all of the limitations of base claim 9, Applicants have rewritten claim 9 to include all of the limitations of claim 28 and canceled claim 28. Accordingly, claim 9 is now in allowable condition.

Because claims 10-16 depend from and further limit claim 9, claims 10-16 are in allowable condition for at least the same reasons. Applicants wish to point

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out that Applicants have also made some clarifying amendments to some of the dependent claims in order to make them consistent with claim 9, as amended.

Claims 17-19

Rather than amend allowed claim 29 to include all of the limitations of base claim 17, Applicants have rewritten claim 17 to include all of the limitations of claim 29 and canceled claim 29. Accordingly, claim 17 is now in allowable condition.

Because claims 18-19 depend from and further limit claim 17, claims 18-19 are in allowable condition for at least the same reasons. Applicants wish to point out that Applicants have also made some clarifying amendments to some of the dependent claims in order to make them consistent with claim 17, as amended.

Conclusion

In view of the foregoing remarks, this Application should be in condition for allowance. A Notice to this affect is respectfully requested. If the Examiner believes, after this Amendment, that the Application is not in condition for allowance, the Examiner is respectfully requested to call the Applicants' Representative at the number below.

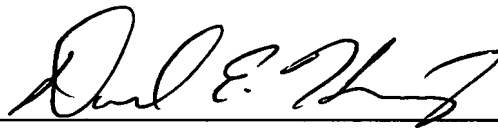
Applicants hereby petition for any extension of time which is required to maintain the pendency of this case. If there is a fee occasioned by this response, including an extension fee, that is not covered by an enclosed check, please charge any deficiency to Deposit Account No. 50-0901.



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If the enclosed papers or fees are considered incomplete, the Patent Office is respectfully requested to contact the undersigned collect at (508) 366-9600, in Westborough, Massachusetts.

Respectfully submitted,



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Attorney Docket No.: TER99-01

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